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Certifying Teachers as Distance Learning Specialists

by Sally L. Bond and Pamela B. Finney, Ed.D.

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As the viability of using distance learning (DL) to reach students increases for school districts, there is a need for sound methodology on how to teach using the medium. How can instructors transition from relating to a warm body to relating to the camera? Are there established certification standards for instructors to teach over the information highway? What skills do instructors need to effectively teach using remote learning technologies?

This article grew from a formative evaluation of the Direct Technical Assistance Model for Assisting

Classroom Teachers in the Use of Technology to Improve Teaching and Learning project in eastern North Carolina conducted by SERVE, Inc. A goal of this project was to identify and improve the skills teachers need to teach over the North Carolina Information Highway (NCIH) and provide certification standards for teachers to teach via the medium of telecommunications technologies.

Certifying Teachers to Teach over the Information Highway

Funded through the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund Sub-Grant Program, the project called for teachers and administrators in eastern North Carolina to participate in a series of workshops to prepare them to teach on the NCIH. As a beginning step in establishing standards for the state of North Carolina, the evaluator was tasked with determining what other states were doing regarding certification of teachers by:

- " Making inquiries on a distance education listserv, the Distance Education Online Symposium¹;
- " Reviewing relevant Web sites, including the US Distance Learning Association at www.usdla.org and the Distance Education and Training Council at www.detc.org; and
- " Searching for related literature on the ERIC online database (<http://ericir.syr.edu>) and in several distance education journals, including *The American Journal of Distance Education* (www.cde.psu.edu/acsde/jour.html), *Distance Education: An International Journal* (www.usq.edu.au/dec/decjournal/demain.html), *From Now On: The Educational Technology Journal* (www.fno.org), *Syllabus: New Directions in Educational Technology* (www.syllabus.com), and *T.H.E. Journal* (www.thejournal.com).

Web and journal searches, though extensive, yielded little useful information. Numerous leads, provided by the members of the Distance Education Online Symposium (DEOS), led to information about a variety of short courses and degree programs designed to prepare teachers to teach via DL technology. The following examples illustrate the range of training options available to teachers:

- " A five-day Distance Education Certification Program offered through the Center for Distance Learning Research at Texas A&M University (www.cdrl.tamu.edu). The program includes 40 hours of competency-based training conducted on the campus of Texas A&M. To receive the Distance Education Professional Certificate, participants must attend all training modules, complete a group presentation, and perform a short assignment or Competency Transfer Activity.
- " California State University-Hayward offers an online program in online teaching and learning (www.online.csu Hayward.edu/) for teachers, trainers, administrators, and instructional designers. The Certificate in Online Teaching and Learning consists of four 4.5-unit courses including Introduction to Online Teaching and Learning, Models for Online Instruction, Technology Tools for Online Instruction, and Designing Curriculum for Online Instruction. This program is not a state-sponsored credential program for K-12 teachers.
- " Athabasca University in Alberta, Canada offers a Masters Degree in Distance Education (www.athabascau.ca/html/depts/mde/mdebroch.htm). The program was designed to cover key competencies in distance education, including systems concepts, instructional systems design, individualized instruction, developing an instructional product, and planning and management of distance education programs. Degree candidates complete 42 credits to receive the MDE. All courses for the degree are delivered via distance education media, including the Internet.

The external evaluator sought to identify DL certification programs tied to state teacher licensure. The Distance Learning Endorsement Program, a joint effort of the Utah State Office of Education and the Department of Instructional Technology at Utah State University, was the only program identified. In addition, of note are certification programs at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and by The Teletraining Institute in Stillwater, Oklahoma. These programs do not award state-recognized credentials. Their clienteles include business, industry, government, higher education, and K-12 education. Course requirements for these programs are included in this article to provide additional ideas for developing a DL certification process.

Utah's Distance Learning Endorsement Program

(<http://dlendorsement.usu.edu/>)

At the request of the Utah State Office of Education (USOE), the Department of Instructional Technology at Utah State University (DIT/USU) designed a course of study to prepare teachers to teach via the Utah Education Network's EDNET. Those who successfully complete the program will receive an endorsement on their teaching certificates. The DL endorsement is similar to the supplementary endorsement awarded for Gifted and Talented.

To guide the development of the Distance Learning Endorsement Program, the design team first consulted state standards for teacher preparation programs. Then the USOE and the DIT/USU developed a set of specific standards for the endorsement program. These standards were subsequently adopted by the State Advisory Committee on Teacher Education, a sub-committee of the State Board of Education.

Before the development of this program, DL teachers received 20 contact hours of training. In the new DL Endorsement Program, teachers complete 12 semester credit hours (four courses) in about a year. Through their training as DL specialists, program participants should:

- " Develop an understanding of issues associated with teaching and learning when the instructor and students are separated by distance and/or time;
- " Acquire the skills needed to design effective instruction, facilitate DL, and integrate DL resources and techniques into classroom instruction; and
- " Become proficient users of distributed learning technologies.

The first cohort of teachers in the program began their course of study (summer 1999) by completing an intensive weeklong workshop. The workshop is the only face-to-face course in the program; subsequent courses will be conducted via EDNET and include the following:

- " Distance Learning Workshop;
- " Learning and Teaching at a Distance;
- " Producing Distance Learning Resources; and
- " Practicum in Distance Learning.

As part of its proposal for the Distance Learning Endorsement Program, the Department of Instructional Technology at USU specified the ways in which the program would address state standards for teacher

preparation programs².

Distance Education Certificate Program

(www.uwex.edu/disted/depd)

The University of Wisconsin system, a national leader in distance education, has a long history in the field. The system's first correspondence courses were delivered in 1891. Adult education courses were broadcast by radio starting in 1907. The Distance Education Certificate Program was started in August 1993 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison; the first certificate was awarded in October 1994. Clients include business, industry, government, professional organizations, higher education and K-12 education. The Distance Education Certificate Program is designed to provide:

- " An understanding of how to plan and implement a distance education system that meets organizational goals and learning objectives;
- " An understanding of the key components involved in supporting technology and how those components work together as an effective teaching/learning system;
- " An evolving philosophy or vision of DL that guides decision making, problem solving and leadership;
- " Insight into common pitfalls and lessons learned by others that informs daily practice;
- " Access to expert distance educators for consultation and feedback on work-based projects; and
- " Hands-on experience as a distance learner with minimal travel time and expenses.

To earn the Distance Education Certificate, participants complete 20 continuing education units (CEUs), or 200 study hours (10 hours per CEU). The student can complete all coursework at a distance. In a few instances, the student may also take some electives on campus. While the program is designed to be completed in a year, it typically takes candidates 12-18 months to finish. There is a two-year time limit for completing the program, but it is possible to apply for a six-month extension. Course requirements include orientation (0.5 CEU), four core modules (12 CEUs), electives (7 CEUs), and a final report (0.5 CEU)³.

The Teletraining Institute, Inc. Certification Programs

(<http://www.teletrain.com/>)

- The Teletraining Institute, Inc. (TTI) is a private, for-profit enterprise that started in 1993 as a joint venture between Oklahoma State University-Stillwater, a national leader in distance education, and Parker Consulting, Inc., a Wisconsin-based distance education consulting firm. TTI's clients include business, industry, government and higher education. The Teletraining Institute offers two types of certification programs for DL instructors⁴:
 - " Certified Distance Learning Instructor (CDLI), and
 - " Certified Distance Learning Instructor-Asynchronous (CDLI-A).

Each program has three phases. In Phase I, certificate candidates enroll in the class that best suits their professional goals. For example, CDLI-A candidates are advised to take Web-Based Instruction in the first phase. Program requirements vary in Phase II depending on the type of certification being sought. In

Phase III, all candidates complete the same advanced course and submit a videotaped instructional unit to a panel of referees.

Summary

This article grew from a need to find out what programs were available nationwide for certification as a distance learning educator. There were three programs identified as a result of an exhaustive review of sources. Coursework in these programs includes a mix of theory and hands-on learning. Of the three programs, only the Utah endorsement program offers a credential tied to state teacher certification⁵.

Sally L. Bond is a program evaluation consultant based in Pittsboro, North Carolina. She received a B.A. in Sociology and Anthropology at Lehigh University and an M.A. in Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. From 1986-1998, Ms. Bond held a variety of educational research and evaluation positions before founding an independent consulting practice, The Program Evaluation Group, which specializes in the evaluation of educational and social programs.

E-mail: usbond@mindspring.com

Pamela B. Finney is a senior evaluation specialist with SERVE (one of ten federally funded regional education labs) located at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She received an undergraduate degree from Averett College, a Masters from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and a Doctorate from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Dr. Finney began her career as a secondary school business and vocational office education teacher and later worked in Human Resources as a Training and EEO Administrator. For the past seven years, she has worked in program evaluation.

E-mail: pfinney@serve.org

1. To subscribe to the Distance Education Online Symposium at Pennsylvania State University, post the following command to listserv@psuvm.psu.edu: subscribe deos-l
2. For more information about the Distance Learning Endorsement Program, contact George Miller (801-538-7790, gtmiller@usoe.k12.ut.us) or Linda Wolcott (435-797-2687, wolcott@cc.usu.edu).
3. *For more information about the Distance Education Certificate Program, contact Christine (Chris) Olgren at (608) 262-8530 or cholgren@facstaff.wisc.edu.*
4. *In addition to these two instructor certifications, TTI also offers a certification program for distance learning administrators (CDLA). For more information about The Teletraining Institute's certification programs, contact Stacy Oakes at (800) 755-2356 or stacy@teletrain.com*
5. *For a summary of the course requirements, length of study, instructional delivery modes, and costs associated with each of these programs, see the chart below*

Core Modules

Learning at a Distance

Distance Education Technology

Instructional Systems Design

Evaluation in Distance Education

Standard Electives

Learner Support Services

Learning Contract

Annual Conference on Distance Teaching and Learning

Designing for Interactive Audio

Interactive Strategies for Video Courses

Site Coordination

Issues in Using Multimedia Systems

Managing Distance Learning in Corporate Settings

Managing Distance Learning in Higher Education

Introduction to Online Learning

Group Processes for Online Learning

Designing for Online Learning

Other Requirements

Orientation Planning

Capstone Report

Program	Required Courses or Modules	Length of Study	Instructional Delivery Modes	Cost of the Program
DL Endorsement Program Utah State University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● DL Workshop (3 credits) ● Learning and Teaching at a Distance (3 credits) ● Producing DL Resources (3 credits) ● Practicum in DL (3 credits) 	Approximately one year, or four semesters (summer, fall, spring, summer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Face-to-face ● Synchronous ● Asynchronous 	\$1938 for tuition and workshop fee Price does not include the cost of room and board for the on-campus DL workshop

<p>Distance Education Certificate Program University of Wisconsin-Madison</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Orientation Planning (0.5 CEU) ● Learning at a Distance (3 CEUs) ● Distance Education Technology (3 CEUs) ● Instructional Systems Design (3 CEUs) ● Evaluation in Distance Education (3 CEUs) ● Electives (7 CEUs) ● Capstone report (0.5 CEU) 	<p>20 CEUs, or 200 self-paced study hours, that are typically completed in 12-18 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some electives offered on campus ● Self-paced core modules of print handbooks, audiotapes, and videotapes ● Audio seminars via telephone conferencing ● Internet seminars via the World Wide Web and computer discussion forums ● Individualized advising via e-mail, phone, or fax ● Group networking via computers listservs 	<p>\$2500 for Core Modules and Standard Electives</p>
<p>Certified DL Instructor Certified DL Instructor-Asynchronous The Teletraining Institute, Inc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Academy, or Teletechniques I, or Web-Based Instruction, or Train the TeleTrainer, or Teletechniques for Audiographics ● Teletechniques II ● Teletechniques III 	<p>Courses are short, intensive, and range from 4-10 days. With additional requirements, candidates take 1-3 years to complete certificates:</p> <p>CDLI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 100 hours as Distance Learning Instructor · Other specified activities <p>CDLI-A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Develop and deliver a 	<p>Hands-on training provided on-site at TTI facilities in Stillwater, OK or Bridgewater, MA. All coursework can also be done at a distance if candidate has appropriate receiving equipment.</p>	<p>Cost of Level I courses varies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The Academy, \$4,495 · Teletechniques I, \$2,195 · Web-Based Instruction, \$2,195 · Train the TeleTrainer, call for price quote · Teletechniques for

		40-hour computer-driven course	Audiographics, \$1,000
		· Other specified activities	· Teletechniques II, \$2,195